

How to Exercise Right in the Classroom

STUDENT

Studying for your future professional life is exciting, rewarding, and forever challenging. At times however it can seem like too much.

Pressures of assignments, study and the demands of life: students may face challenges to their health, both physical and mental, that may have long-term effects reaching well past their undergraduate years.

+ COMMON AILMENTS HEALTH RISKS FOR STUDENTS

REDUCED SELF-CARE AND SELF-MANAGEMENT

When assignments start to pile up, time out for exercise is often the first sacrifice made and good habits tend to fall by the wayside, often with negative consequences. During exams, students tend to overlook their most basic needs, which can leave them vulnerable and lead to poor performance.

EXCESS SEDENTARY TIME

Excess sedentary time can be a problem for students, particularly those who tend to ditch the in-person lectures for more leisurely study online. Too much sitting can lead to increased risk of injuries, overweight and obesity and over long periods of time can contribute to chronic diseases and early mortality.

POSTURE ISSUES

Excessive sitting while studying can also lead to postural issues. Over time, poor posture that demands support from phasic fibres causes the deeper supporting muscles to waste away from lack of use. Weak, unused muscles tend to tighten and this shortening of muscle length can compact the bones of the spine (vertebrae) and worsen posture.

MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

It is estimated that 45% of Australians aged between 16 and 85 will experience a mental health-related disorder in their lifetime, while 20% will experience symptoms of a mental health disorder each year.



? WHY IS EXERCISE SO IMPORTANT?

INCREASED MENTAL CLARITY AND COGNITIVE PERFORMANCE

If you're lacking focus, a 30-minute jog or cycle can help restore your focus and prep your brain for learning. There is growing evidence that exercise is associated with improved academic performance. Regions of the brain involved in attention, memory and cognition are activated by aerobic exercise in younger and older adults, and this is reflected in higher test scores. A 2014 analysis also found that overall grades, measured by grade point average

(GPA) were higher in university students who participated in regular aerobic exercise.

IMPROVED MENTAL HEALTH

Give your mind a break with daily exercise. In addition to the proven benefits in academic performance, physiological benefits from daily moderate-to-vigorous intensity exercise include management of depression and anxiety symptoms, better sleep and higher energy levels from metabolic and cardiorespiratory improvements. Use this time to consolidate your thoughts so you're calm and focused when you return to study.

EXERCISE RIGHT RECOMMENDS

Exercise Right recommends at least 150 minutes of physical activity a week. Find something you enjoy, such as jogging or running, dancing, or joining a University sports team.

CHEAP EXERCISE ALTERNATIVES

When money is tight, there's no better time to get savvy about some cheap exercise alternatives.

Why not get creative and put your text books to good use? Who needs dumbbells when Principles of Biochemistry is lying around! Squats, lunges, shoulder presses, bicep curls and arm raises just got challenging, and you didn't even have to leave your house.

ADD INCIDENTAL EXERCISE TO YOUR DAY

Exercise without really exercising! Suggestions to add incidental exercise into your day include:

- Walk to/from class the long way
- Choose active transport to Uni or school – such as walking or cycling

TAKE YOUR WORKOUT OUTDOORS!

Consider getting outside or going for a walk in the local park. This can be completed each day, without the cost of a gym membership. A research team from the Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry found that outdoor exercise was associated with increased energy and revitalization, as well as decreased confusion, anger, depression and tension, when compared with exercising indoors.

Outdoor participants in this study also reported enjoying their workouts more and said they were more likely to repeat them than those participants who exercise indoors.

FIND A TIME THAT WORKS BEST FOR YOU (AND STICK TO IT)

The best time to exercise depends on when you have the most energy and motivation.

Once you find a time that works for you, try to stick to it. Not only will it become a habit (like brushing your teeth before bed), but studies show that once your body adjusts to exercising at a specific time each day, it will start to perform better at that time than any other time of the day.